



Need Money for School?

3,500 Sources on IDES Website

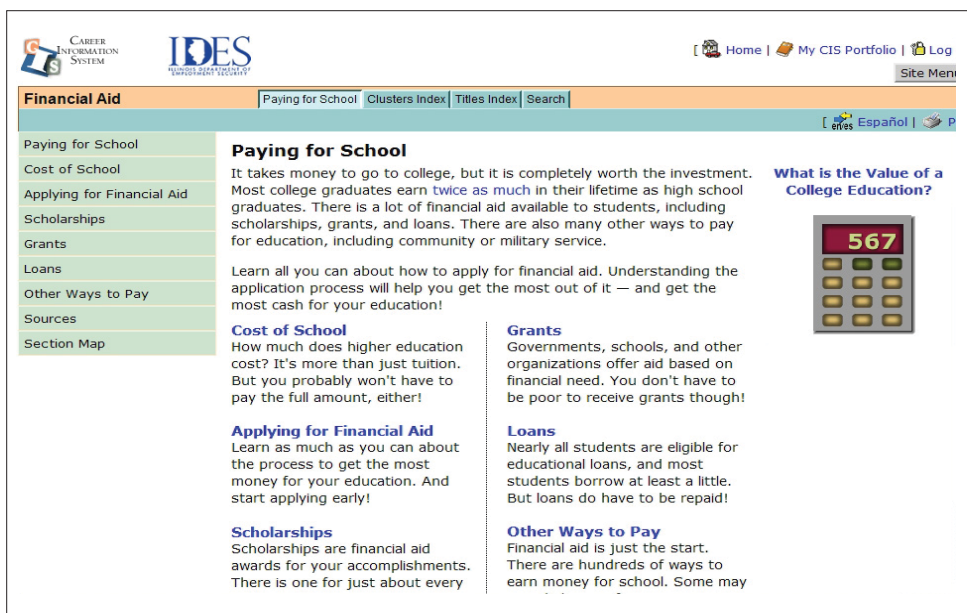
by Lola Lucas

Paying for education after high school is increasingly expensive because tuition has been rising much faster than the rate of inflation, according to the College Board.

Economic hard times have bumped students from private institutions to public universities and from the public universities to the community colleges for the first two years. For some, even community college is not affordable. As costs skyrocket, students sometimes find themselves burdened with debt for decades after graduation.

Because the need is great, ads frequently pop up on the Internet: “Would you go back to school if you qualified for a grant?” and “Local mom gets money for school—find out how!” There are also questionable services that charge hundreds of dollars to produce a report on scholarships that could easily be found in public sources at no charge.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security offers two free and reliable online resources for financial aid. Through the department’s **Career Information System**



The *Paying for School* page in CIS, accessed at www.ides.illinois.gov

(CIS) and ReNEW, the adult version of CIS, students and their parents and experienced workers who need retraining can find out how to get help paying for school. Both career resources are available at www.ides.illinois.gov. *Financial Aid* and the online sorting tool, *Financial Aid Sort*, are among the most popular sections in CIS and ReNEW.

Paying for School, one of the blue tabs on the Financial Aid page, offers

tips on applying for scholarships, grants and loans. It also suggests other ways to cover the cost of training, such as military service, community service and employer tuition reimbursement. *Paying for School* describes how to navigate the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA, which establishes financial need for loans and work study programs. A calculator shows the monetary value of a college degree during the span of a career.

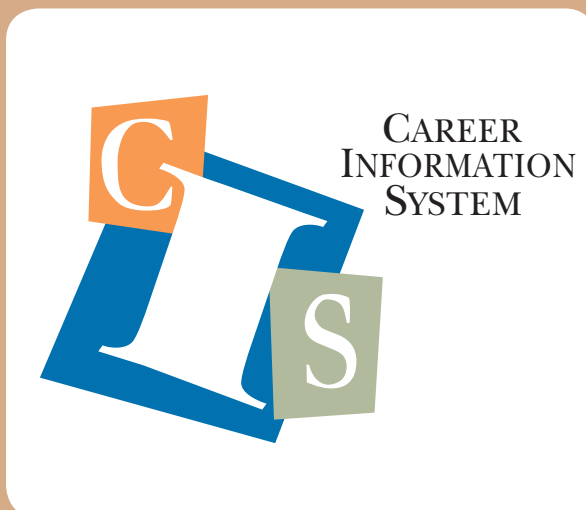
Since one scholarship usually does not cover all four years of college expenses, students will more likely piece together many smaller scholarships, grants and loans. The College Board's *Trends in Student Aid* reports that the average undergraduate received \$11,461 in aid during the 2009-2010 school year.

Financial Aid Sort allows users to search for financial aid sources using 11 different criteria and to create customized lists of their searches. For example, users can narrow down the approximately 3,500 financial aid sources in CIS and ReNEW by searching for scholarships pertaining to an academic major or to certain personal characteristics, such as gender, race or ethnic heritage. Those searching for sports-related awards can find that information through the *Talent* or *Interest* sorting option.

The Programs of Study section in both CIS and ReNEW shows related financial aid for the selected major or training program. For example, a laid-off bookkeeper could search for educational programs in accounting

How to Access CIS or ReNEW:

1. Go to www.ides.illinois.gov
2. Select *Career Information* from the *Individuals* pathway.
3. Click on *Illinois CIS* or *ReNEW* in the left gold menu.
4. Click on *Visit CIS today!* or *Visit ReNEW today!* in the center white area.
5. Use the Illinois resident login (*your city and zip code*).
6. Create a My CIS Portfolio with your own username and password for future visits.



Search for Scholarships in CIS by:

- Scholarship deadlines
- Award type
- Education completed
- Level of study
- Majors
- Academics or leadership
- Financial need
- Talent or interest
- Personal characteristics
- Organizational affiliation
- Local community

and then connect to pertinent financial aid sources through the *Related Information* link. The bookkeeper could find 178 national and Illinois scholarships listed through a second link called *Aid for Study in Business and Management and Administrative Services*. Similarly, a high school senior interested in welding technology could find educational programs

for that field in CIS and link to *Aid for Study in Precision Technology*, which yields 37 national awards.

A typical scholarship entry shows the type and amount of the award, the academic majors or career fields required for the award, where the aid can be used (type of school), application requirements and deadline and contact information.

CIS and ReNEW both offer *Links Outside CIS*, which provides helpful resources such as College Zone, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission site for financial aid. It offers a user-friendly guide to scholarships, grants, work-study, and other related topics. Adults may find the link to Workforce Investment Act certified training programs helpful if they are applying for financial aid funding through the Illinois workNet offices.

Education pays off in lifetime earnings, plus it decreases the possibility of being laid off. According to a recent report commissioned by the Chicago-based Alternative Schools Network, high school dropouts in the U.S. would collect on average about \$71,000 more in benefits, such as food stamps, than what they would pay in taxes over a lifetime. In contrast, high school graduates on average would make a positive net contribution of \$236,000, and college graduates would contribute \$885,000.

Employers are drawn to states and cities with educated workforces. In a broad sense, CIS and ReNEW help Illinois by showing how education can be not just affordable but profitable for people and their communities.

Lola Lucas is an IDES Career Resource Specialist.

Learn More, Earn More

The fastest growing jobs are those requiring at least some postsecondary (after high school) training. The days of low-skilled, high-wage jobs are gone.

The IDES brochure *Learn More Earn More*, at <http://ides.illinois.gov/page.aspx?item=1003>, shows a projected growth rate of 10 percent for all occupations in Illinois through 2018. However, the expected growth

rate for jobs requiring post-secondary training through advanced degrees ranges from 13 to 19 percent. Jobs requiring a high school diploma or less are expected to grow at a less-than-average rate of about 8 percent because those jobs can often be automated or off-shored. In addition, the brochure shows that higher education leads to increased earnings and a decreased likelihood of being laid off.

Higher education can be attained in a paid apprenticeship program, a trade or vocational school, military training or in college. The important thing is to understand the world of work and to connect emerging trends to one's own skills, values, personality and interests for a productive career. CIS and ReNEW can help students and adults find their educational paths and then pay for them.

—by *Lola Lucas*